

July 2, 2010

TO: Teresa Parsons, SPHR  
Director's Review Program Supervisor

FROM: Kris Brophy, SPHR  
Director's Review Program Investigator

SUBJECT: Blaine K. Wheeler v. Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)  
Allocation Review Request ALLO-09-064

### **Director's Determination**

This position review was based on the work performed for the six-month period prior to June 10, 2009, the date the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Human Resources Division (HRD) received Blaine Wheeler's request for a position review. As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits presented during the Director's review conference, and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of his assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude his position is properly allocated to the Information Technology Specialist 5 (ITS 5) classification.

### **Background**

On June 10, 2009, DSHS's HRD received a Position Review Request (PRR) (Exhibit B-4), and a Position Description Form, (PDF) (Exhibit A-7), requesting reallocation of Mr. Wheeler's Information Technology Specialist 5 (ITS 5) position (#JK 52) to the Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6 (ITS/AS 6) classification. Both he and his managers signed the PRR and PDF. On September 14, 2009, Mr. Robert Swanson, Classification & Compensation Manager, DSHS HRD, issued an allocation decision, concluding the ITS 5 best described the duties and responsibilities assigned to Mr. Wheeler's position (Exhibit B-1).

On October 12, 2009, the Department of Personnel received Mr. Wheeler's request for a Director's review of DSHS's allocation determination. On April 20, 2010, I conducted a Director's review conference with Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Swanson concerning his position allocation.

### **Summary of Mr. Wheeler's Perspective**

Mr. Wheeler asserts his position has been designated as the division's highest technical specialist for coordinating the application development of all division IT projects, including

portfolio and project management, software release coordination, and state and federal reporting.

Mr. Wheeler asserts he is trusted by division executive management to independently deal with his assigned high risk, high profile initiatives, and that he has the authority to make commitments on behalf of the division. Mr. Wheeler contends his responsibility for managing project completion for the division's IT projects, leading the division's statewide SEMS workgroup team and other duties mentioned above reaches the ITS/AS 6 level of responsibility. Mr. Wheeler believes the level of independent management and decision making routinely assigned to his position fits within the ITS/AS 6 class level.

### **Summary of DSHS's Reasoning**

DSHS asserts that the overall level and scope of duties and responsibilities assigned to Mr. Wheeler's position does not reach the ITS/AS 6 level. DSHS contends the position has not been designated in writing by IT/IS management to provide technical and organizational leadership in a specialized technology area. DSHS contends Mr. Wheeler's position does not serve as the agency spokesperson and make commitments on behalf of the agency.

DSHS recognizes Mr. Wheeler's high level of expertise and technical knowledge. His position provides recommendations and options to management but contends it does not have the level of responsibility for strategic planning and policy development decision making as required. DSHS asserts Mr. Wheeler's position is more tactical than strategic in focus, focusing on system software changes due to updated business requirements or legislative mandates. DSHS further contends Mr. Wheeler's position does not serve as the highest level authority for developing agency-wide information system architecture, developing business plans and decision packages or negotiating service level agreements for mission critical applications or services.

### **Rationale for Director's Determination**

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

Mr. Wheeler works as an Information Technology Specialist 5 for the Division of Child Support (DCS) for the Economic Services Administration of DSHS.

Mr. Wheeler provides project management methodology and business analysis expertise to coordinate complex information technology (IT) software development projects for the Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS) Operations division. SEMS Operations develops and updates more than 25 applications for the WA Child Support program. The

primary application is SEMS, a complex, high risk, high impact, mission critical system that provides case management, payment processing, database access, and automated child support enhancement actions to over 8,000 users in state services and other agencies. SEMS is a highly complex collection of interrelated components and programs, which are stored on a host database, network servers, and individual PCs that DCS uses to perform the work related to the collection of child support. The system adheres to strict federal and state system requirements and provides services to over a million individuals, collecting and processing over \$1.4 billion a biennium.

Mr. Wheeler reports directly to Mr. Wally McClure, Chief of SEMS Operations, who in turn reports to Mr. David Stillman, Director of DCS. Mr. Wheeler does not supervise or lead others. Mr. Wheeler completed both a Position Review Request Form (Exhibit A-4) and Position Description Form (Exhibit A-7) to document his duties and responsibilities. While generally consistent, the descriptions of work and percentage of time given to Mr. Wheeler's major job duties vary between the two documents. Mr. McClure and Mr. Stillman signed both documents, concurring with the statements describing Mr. Wheeler's assigned duties. In his letter to the Director (Exhibit A-3), Mr. McClure provides clarification regarding the two documents:

"...When discussing the PRR with Mr. Wheeler while he prepared it we consciously chose to make the duty descriptions different between the PDF and the PRR.... In an effort to be as clear as possible, we agreed the PRR should split out the description of the pieces of the job into separate line entries to aligning (sic) with the varying lengths of time he has performed the roles. In this position, managing projects (Blaine called it "project coordination", managing software releases, creating the Annual Advanced Planning Document Update and overseeing preparation of the OCSE-157 are very closely entwined responsibilities that together create a very high-level responsibility."

The PRR was the primary document used for this review. In the PRR, Mr. Wheeler states the primary purpose of his position is to coordinate application development for SEMS Operations.

He describes his major duties as follows: (summarized from Exhibit B-4)

30% **Manage complex IT projects and lead the statewide workgroup that evaluates project requests and assigns priority scores** - Record and update plans with DSHS Office of Portfolio Management. Identify and see that the appropriate tasks for a project are done including project Charter, Task Statement, Risk Management Plan, business and functional requirements, communication, test and release plans; manage meetings; document progress and project changes.

Lead the SEMS Priority Team (SPoT) in the review, evaluation, prioritization of SEMS work requests. Create reports to be used as guides by DCS and SEMS management to assign development work for SEMS Operations.

25% **Manage SEMS software releases** - Coordinate and manage the construction,

documentation and distribution of software updates for 26 SEMS applications distributed to more than 1300 computer work stations distributed across 48 locations across the state. Communicate with management, developers, analysts and stakeholders maintain awareness of future changes which will require changes to applications. Ensure software release content complies with federal reporting requirements. Coordinate, create, and manage the documentation and distribution of software releases.

- 15% **Annual Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement OCSE-157 Report -** Coordinate, document, compile, and manage changes to the OCSE-157 report which is filed with the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. Review and compare annual notice requirements; consult with senior programmers, policy, state and federal auditors and program experts to develop functional requirements and develop programming specifications to meet new reporting requirements. Manage testing of programming changes, gather necessary information; design, manage and apply statistical tests to ensure accuracy before submitting files to OCSE Auditors. Update and publish system documentation, and plan for future changes.
- 15% **Annual Advanced Planning Document Update (AAPDU)** – Document, publish and maintain changes to the federal funding request report called the Annual Advanced Planning Document Update (AAPDU). Update the AAPDU to report system performance, advise OCSE of accomplishments or failures for the reporting year, report Revenue Stream model cost/benefit development updates, describe IT project development progress, project costs for the upcoming year and request new development funds. Consult with project managers, SEMS management team, programmers and analysts to gather and report information regarding all software development projects worked on and completed in the reporting year.
- 10% Consult with communications, software, hardware, network and database experts in order to resolve complex problems.
- 5% Consult with SEMS and DCS management, on strategic planning and policy development in the area of project management and project evaluation and management.
- 5% Consult with management, SEMS analysts and programmers on interfaces, design, federal certification requirements and other topics of expertise.
- 5% Other duties as assigned.

Mr. McClure made the following comments regarding examples of decisions Mr. Wheeler is authorized to make without prior review (Exhibit B-4):

- Go - no go on routine releases.
- Regular project meetings and day to day decisions on projects.
- Consultation with other managers, units and divisions.

- Project decisions within (the) boundaries of a charter.

In his letter to the Director (Exhibit A-3), Mr. McClure clarified his comment regarding, "go-no go on routine releases." Mr. McClure stated his comment, "...does not convey the full import of the phrase. I characterize our releases as routine because Blaine has overseen or constructed the release software and supporting infrastructure and processes which enable us to publish updates in a manner that they become routine to us."

Mr. McClure signed and dated an Assessment of Observed Job Performance (Exhibit A-6) as part of Mr. Wheeler's PDF (Exhibit A-7). In the comment section Mr. McClure stated that,

"Blaine has performed many of the higher level duties (as described in the position review questionnaire) for a year or more. These duties include coordinating SEMS software releases, writing the annual federal Advanced Planning Document Update, and performing analysis for the Federal Reporting logic. Recently (4 months ago), he was assigned additional responsibility for coordinating SEMS projects as our lead project manager and managing our most complex projects."

### Comparison of Duties

When comparing the assignment of work and level of responsibility to the available class specifications, the Class Series Concept (if one exists) followed by the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics are primary considerations. While examples of typical work identified in a class specification do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification.

The Class Series Concept for the Information Technology series states in relevant part:

"Positions in this category perform professional information technology systems and/or applications support for client applications, databases, computer hardware and software products, network infrastructure equipment, or telecommunications software or hardware.

This category broadly describes positions in one or more information technology disciplines such as: Application Development and Maintenance, Application Testing, Capacity Planning, Business Analysis and/or Process Re-Engineering...IT Project Management, Systems Software, Web Development, or Voice Communications."

Mr. Wheeler's position performs professional technology systems software applications support within the IT Business Analysis and IT Project Management technology disciplines; and therefore should be allocated to a class within the Information Technology series.

### Comparison of Duties to Information Technology Specialist/Application Specialist 6

The Definition for the **ITS/AS 6** class states:

“Serves as the highest level authority for an agency or in a major subdivision of DSHS in an information technology specialty area such as, but not limited to: operating system architecture, network architecture, applications development, applications support and enhancement, desktop/server operating systems, data architecture/administration, security architecture/administration, project management methodology or telephony systems architecture.”

The ITS/AS 6 Distinguishing Characteristics include the following:

“This is the expert professional level where incumbents are designated in writing by IT/IS management to provide technical and organizational leadership in a specialized area of technology. Incumbents possess advanced technical as well as business knowledge and grasp the overall impact of their specialty such that they are trusted by management to independently deal with high risk, high profile initiatives that may impact significant/fundamental public services. Incumbents have mastered the ability to translate technological options into business terms and interact with executive management to create technology solutions to mission critical business problems. Incumbents in this class serve as the agency spokesperson in their area of technical expertise and may make commitments on behalf of their agency. Serve as a technical mentor, coach and trainer to others. Often supervises others.”

The key distinction at the ITS/AS 6 level is having written designation at the agency level (or major subdivision within DSHS), as the highest delegated authority in a designated information technology specialty. While both classes perform highly-complex, expert-level tasks, incumbents at the ITS/AS 6 level have the broadest span of control and scope of organizational responsibility for planning, designing and developing information technology systems and processes. They generally serve as the agency's chief architect or systems administrator and have responsibility for enterprise-wide strategic planning and policy development. These positions work with broad-based technical and executive management groups to lead strategic business initiatives, plan for and/or address key legislative mandates, and integrate new technologies for information technology systems and applications that generally have significant statewide or multi-agency impact. They define requirements for data base management systems and support software; develop plan and coordinate agency-wide implementation of new data base management systems software, and serve as the highest-level technical consultant to executive management within their assigned area of responsibility.

In total, the scope of Mr. Wheeler's position does not have this overall level of responsibility.

To be allocated to the ITS/AS 6 level, the position must be designated in writing by IT/IS management to provide technical and organizational leadership in a specialized area of technology.

The PRB has discussed the importance of written designation as the highest level authority at the expert professional level. In Eastern Washington University v. Akin, PRB Case No. R-

ALLO-09-004 (2009), the Board determined that allocation to the ITS/AS6 classification is not appropriate unless such a written designation has been given by information technology or information services management.

Mr. Wheeler works in the SEMS Operations division of DCS, which is a division of the ESA of DSHS. Mr. Wheeler has been designated in writing by DCS IT management as the highest level authority for IT Project Management Methodology for SEMS Operations. The submitted PDF (Exhibit A-7) for Mr. Wheeler's position states that he "... acts as the SEMS expert professional, as designated in writing by IT/IS management, providing technical development and organizational leadership in portfolio and project management methodology and software updates." Mr. McClure states that he expanded Mr. Wheeler's position to include coordination for all SEMS projects as the division's lead project manager and to manage the division's most complex projects. Mr. McClure noted Mr. Wheeler was given and had been performing this responsibility for four months prior to the submittal of the PDF. Mr. David Stillman, Director of DCS, signed the form, indicating agreement with the written designation.

During the telephone conference, Mr. Swanson stated that generally the written designation for DSHS employees is indicated on the PDF. Mr. Swanson stated, however, that having the written designation stated in the PDF does not mean the HRD Classification and Compensation Unit unequivocally supports the statement. Mr. Swanson stated allocation determinations to the ITS/AS 6 level are made based on the review of the actual work performed.

However, the written designation assigned to this position is consistent with prior Board decisions, as cited in Akin. For example, the PRB cited Lisle v. Department of Labor and Industries, PAB Case No. ALLO-00-0020 (2000), in which the PAB reallocated an employee to the ITS/AS6 classification after finding that the employee's classification questionnaire, which was signed by his supervisor and by the Assistant Director of Information Services, designated the employee as the agency's highest level authority and highest technical specialist for the department. Specifically, in Lisle, the appellant had been designated in writing as the highest level authority in the information technology specialty area of Imaging Technology and served as the agency's spokesperson in that area of technical expertise.

Mr. Wheeler's position was expanded during the review period to include responsibility for serving as the lead IT Project Manager for all major SEMS projects and associated applications. Mr. Wheeler's PDF designates his position as the highest level authority for IT Project Management for SEMS Operations. This reaches the ITS/AS 6 level of responsibility. However, Mr. Wheeler did not perform at this level of responsibility for a majority of time as required for allocation to this class. Mr. Wheeler was given this level of responsibility for approximately four months of the review period. Further, ITS/AS 6 level positions make strategic decisions that affect systems and how they are created and developed into the future. During the review period the majority of Mr. Wheeler's project management responsibilities were more tactical in nature, focusing on system software changes due to updated business requirements. Mr. Wheeler spent approximately thirty-five percent of this time managing projects, which primarily involved managing the legislatively mandated system changes for the 2009 Cash Medical Support project. There were 25 people working on the project (primarily business analysts and programmers)

working on forms, screens, host programming and batch programming. There were 20 forms requiring data field changes which required adding data elements, transactions, and other required elements. Mr. Wheeler stated during the conference that the biggest issue for the project involved having sufficient lead time to make 39 form changes. Mr. Wheeler worked with staff from the policy, training, field operations, and the auditing unit departments on policy issues related to the project. He reported directly to Mr. David Stillman and provided regular updates regarding project status. Mr. McClure stated in the PRR (Exhibit B-4) that during the review period his level of independent decision making authority was limited to making operational decisions within the confines of the project charter. Mr. Wheeler's overall scope and level of responsibility regarding this project is consistent with ITS 5 level work.

In addition, the portion of his project management work leading the SEMS Priority Team (SPoT) in the review, evaluation, prioritization of SEMS work requests does not fully reach the ITS/AS 6 level of responsibility. Mr. Wheeler works with the SPoT workgroup to review, evaluate, and prioritize and publish previously-developed SEMS work requests for DCS management review. Mr. Wheeler leads the work team so that prioritized work requests can be recommended to Mr. Stillman for implementation. Mr. Wheeler stated during the conference that the work requests are tiered by level of complexity and importance; and a portion of the requests represent the division's most complex IT projects which impact mission-critical applications within the SEMS support enforcement system statewide. However Mr. Wheeler's responsibilities were tactically focused involving creating and distributing scoring matrices, compiling score sheets, leading discussion sessions, and coordinating the publication of the "TOP 25 SEMS Work Request" for management review. The scope of his work did not include working with division technical and management staff to strategically plan what is needed and develop the initial work requests. Mr. Wheeler's position is advisory in nature more than strategically focused. These duties in total are consistent with ITS 5 level work.

Mr. Wheeler's other primary duties include coordinating SEMS software releases, writing the Annual Federal Advanced Planning Document Update (AAPDU), and the Annual Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE-157 Report). The scope of this work includes consulting with project managers, SEMS management team, programmers and analysts; gathering, compiling and reporting complex information regarding all software development projects worked on and completed in the reporting year. While highly complex duties, these responsibilities are consistent with the ITS 5 level of responsibility.

The majority of Mr. Wheeler's work during the review period did not fully reach the breadth and depth of ITS/AS 6 responsibility. ITS/AS 6 positions have the broadest span of control and scope of organizational responsibility for planning, designing and developing information technology systems and processes. His position should not be reallocated to that class.

#### Comparison of Duties to Information Technology Specialist 5.

The Definition for the **Information Technology 5 class** states:



This is the supervisory or expert level. Provides expert consultation and specialized analysis, design, development, acquisition, installation, maintenance, programming, testing, quality assurance, troubleshooting, and/or problem resolution tasks for major organization-wide, high risk/high impact, or mission-critical applications computing and/or telecommunication systems, projects, databases or database management systems; support products, or operational problems.

Performs highly-complex tasks such as conducting capacity planning to determine organization-wide needs and make recommendations; designing complex agency- or institution-wide enterprise systems crossing multiple networks, platforms or telecommunication environments; overseeing the daily operations of large-scale or enterprise systems; identifying and resolving operational problems for major high risk systems with centralized, organization-wide functions; testing multi-dimensional applications, providing quality assurance; developing standards or enhancing existing, high risk and impact, mission critical applications; integrating business solutions, or writing feasibility studies and decision packages for high visibility/impact initiatives.

Provides leadership and expert consultation for large-scale projects or enterprise systems that often integrate new technology and/or carry out organization-wide information technology functions, or impact other institutions or agencies. Provides project management leadership, technical expertise and demonstrates knowledge of project management practices, principles, and skills.

May supervise information technology specialists or function as a recognized expert who is sought out by others in resolving or assessing controversial or precedent-setting issues.

Mr. Wheeler's duties and responsibilities fit within the ITS 5 classification. He performs expert level IT project management work to support, and enhance major DCS high risk/high impact, and mission-critical applications within SEMS. Mr. Wheeler provides project management leadership, technical expertise and demonstrates knowledge of project management practices, principles, and skills. Mr. Wheeler identifies and determines that the appropriate tasks for a project are done including developing project charters, task statement, risk management plans, business and functional requirements, communication, test and release plans. He manages meetings, documents progress, projects changes, and keeps DCS IT and executive management apprised of project status. This is consistent with Mr. McClure's indication that he has served as IT Project Manager for large and significant SEMS projects.

Based on the level, scope and diversity of the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to Mr. Wheeler's position, his position is properly allocated to the ITS 5 classification.

### **Appeal Rights**

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located at 600 South Franklin, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 664-0388, and the fax number is (360) 753-0139.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Robert Swanson, DSHS  
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits

**Blaine Wheeler v. Dept. of Social and Health Services**

**ALLO-09-064**

List of Exhibits

**A. Blaine Wheeler Exhibits**

1. Appeal Letter from Blaine Wheeler, dated October 12, 2009.
2. Copy of DSHS Allocation determination letter dated September 14, 2009.
3. Letter from Wally McClure, Chief SEMS Operations, clarifying statements in the Position Review Request of Blaine Wheeler, dated October 5, 2009.
4. Position Review Request for Blaine Wheeler, dated June 3, 2009.
5. Position Action Request form for Blaine Wheeler, dated 6/10/2009.
6. Assessment of Observed Job Performance for Blaine Wheeler, dated June 8, 2009.
7. Updated Position Description Form for Blaine Wheeler (position JK52), dated June 10, 2009.
8. Original Position Description Form for Blaine Wheeler (position JK52), dated February 16, 2007.
9. Copy of DCS Organizational Chart – Division of Child Support (SEMS), dated May 14, 2009.

**B. Department of Social and Health Services Exhibits**

1. DSHS allocation determination letter from Robert Swanson to Blaine Wheeler dated September 14, 2009.
2. Position Description Form (PDF) for Blaine Wheeler, indicating position action taken by DSHS, dated 9/15/2009.
3. DCS Organizational Chart (Division of Child Support SEMS), dated may 14, 2009.
4. Copy of Blaine Wheeler's Position Review Request dated June 10, 2009.
5. DOP Class Specification for Information Technology Specialist 4 (479L).
6. DOP Class Specification for Information Technology Specialist 5 (479M).
7. DOP Class Specification: Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6 (479N).